



OPEN LETTER

To: Governing Board and Members of the International Paralympic Committee

Via Email: governance.compliance@paralympic.org; info@paralympic.org

Re: Paralympic Values Cannot Coexist With the Symbols of War

The International Paralympic Committee's decision to allow Russian and Belarusian athletes to compete under their national flags at the Milano-Cortina 2026 Paralympic Games is a profound moral failure.

This decision forces victims to face the symbols of their aggressor.

A significant share of Ukraine's Paralympic team consists of athletes who were wounded as a direct result of Russia's unprovoked and continuing war against Ukraine, a war actively enabled by Belarus. These are men and women who lost limbs, mobility, eyesight, and health under missile strikes, artillery fire, landmines, and drone attacks. They are not abstract participants in a geopolitical dispute. They are living witnesses to the consequences of this war.

To now compel these athletes to compete in the presence of the flags, anthems, and state symbols of the very states responsible for their injuries is morally reprehensible.

The Paralympic Movement exists to uphold dignity, inclusion, and respect. Yet the IPC has chosen to normalize state symbolism for an aggressor during an active war, turning the Games into a stage where victims are expected to silently coexist with the representatives of those who inflicted their suffering.

This was not an inevitable outcome. It was a choice.

At the IPC General Assembly in September 2025, a majority voted anonymously to lift the partial suspensions of Russia and Belarus. The vote counts are public. The identities are not. On an issue involving war, mass injury, and credible allegations of war crimes, the refusal to stand openly behind such a decision demonstrates a troubling lack of transparency and moral courage.

There is nothing neutral about restoring national flags during an ongoing war. Neutrality would mean protecting the Games from state propaganda and shielding athletes, especially those wounded by war, from being re-traumatized on the world's stage.

The IPC must reverse this decision.

At minimum, Russian and Belarusian athletes should compete only without national symbols for as long as the war continues and accountability for its crimes remains unresolved. Anything less abandons the very values the Paralympic Movement claims to represent.

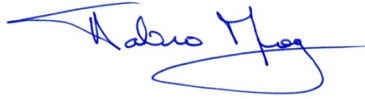
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History will judge this moment. The IPC can either reaffirm that the Paralympic Movement stands for dignity, justice, and humanity or accept responsibility for eroding those principles when moral clarity is most urgently required.

We call upon the IPC to call an immediate meeting of members and reverse this decision.

Respectfully,



Paul Grod
President,
Ukrainian World Congress

Encl. APPENDIX: Legal, Procedural, and Moral Grounds for Reversal

APPENDIX

Legal, Procedural, and Moral Grounds for Reversal

A. The Human Reality the IPC Ignored

- Ukraine's Paralympic delegation includes dozens of athletes who are war-wounded veterans, many injured since 2022.
 - These athletes were harmed by the same state now being readmitted with full national symbolism.
 - Forcing victims to face the symbols of the aggressor violates basic principles of athlete welfare and dignity.
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B. The Vote—and the Problem of Secrecy

- At the September 2025 IPC General Assembly:
 - Russia
 - Full suspension rejected: 111 against / 55 for / 11 abstentions
 - Partial suspension rejected: 91 against / 77 for / 8 abstentions
 - Belarus
 - Full suspension rejected: 119 against / 48 for / 9 abstentions

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- Partial suspension rejected: 103 against / 63 for / 10 abstentions
 - These were decisive outcomes, yet no individual accountability exists.
 - On a matter of war and human suffering, secret ballots shield decision-makers from moral responsibility.
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C. Legal Authority Was Not Exhausted—It Was Abandoned

- Arbitration decisions do not require the IPC to restore flags, anthems, or state symbols.
 - The IPC retains full discretion to impose proportionate safeguards, including neutral status.
 - The continued exclusion of state symbolism is lawful, reasonable, and widely used across international sport during conflicts.
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D. Proportionality and Moral Asymmetry

- The war is ongoing.
 - Belarus remains an active enabler.
 - Ukrainian athletes continue to train under air-raid sirens, blackouts, and bombardment.
 - Restoring aggressor symbolism while victims compete under trauma creates an indefensible moral imbalance.
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E. What the IPC Must Do

1. Immediately reverse the decision permitting Russian and Belarusian national symbols.
 2. Reinstate neutral participation only, for the duration of the war.
 3. Publish a reasoned explanation addressing athlete welfare, proportionality, and moral risk.
 4. Engage directly with Ukrainian Paralympic representatives and civil society.
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The Paralympic Games cannot claim moral authority while compelling the wounded to stand beneath the flags of those who wounded them.

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